

VANESSA INDICA (HERBST) IN WARWICKSHIRE:
NEW TO BRITAIN

By KEITH TURNER*

When I lived at Kites Hardwick, near Dunchurch, Warwickshire I made a small collection of British butterflies for display to farmers and others at meetings on conservation topics, the connection between several Vanessid species and nettles being particularly relevant. In early September 1973 I caught in my garden, alighting on flowers including a clump of *Phlox drummondii*, a specimen which I took casually to be *Vanessa cardui*. I papered it almost at once after capture, and it was only when I set it in November that I noticed the "strange" markings, more akin to *V. atalanta*, though the colour seemed right for *V. cardui*. I decided that it was an aberration of one of these species, and made a mental note to show it to a colleague more knowledgeable about butterflies.

However, it was only much later that my friend and colleague Mr. J. Firmin, co-author of "*The Butterflies and larger Moths of Essex*", visited my present house in Gloucestershire in the spring of 1982. He immediately spotted the specimen, and suggested that it could be an example of *V. indica*, which is found in the Far East and also in the Canary Islands and Madeira. He reported this find to the Editor of the *Entomologist's Record*, and his identification has been confirmed by Mr R. F. Bretherton and Dr. L. G. Higgins. The specimen has now been given to the British Museum (Natural History) for a place in the national collection. I understand that it is believed to be the first known record of *V. indica* in Britain.

[This specimen is a large female of 60mm wingspan, the wings slightly rubbed in the basal area, but apparently without fading of colour. The bands on the fore and hind wings are reddish-orange, rather brighter than the colour of *C. cardui* but not approaching that of fresh, or even of faded, specimens of *V. atalanta*; the four white spots on the forewings are large and prominent. Indentation of the margin of the hindwings and of the sub-apical margin of the forewings is slight. Comparison with specimens kindly shown to me by Dr. Higgins in his collection, and also with long series at the British Museum, shows that this specimen almost certainly belongs to *V. i. indica* (Herbst) and not to *V. i. calliroe* Hbn. (*vulcania* Godart) from the Canary Islands and Madeira. In the latter the forewing bands are bright rosy red, though some fading may occur in old or worn specimens; the white spots are usually reduced in size; and the apical and hindwing margins are more deeply indented than in *V. i. indica*, and most specimens are markedly smaller.

The distribution, relationship, and differences of *V. i. indica* and *V. i. calliroe* have recently been fully studied in R. Leestmans, *Problemes de Speciation dans le genre Vanessa: Vanessa vulcania*

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Godart stat. nov. et *Vanessa buana* Frhst. stat nov., bona species (*Linneana Belgica*, 1978, pars VII, 130-156).

The means of arrival of this specimen in Warwickshire can only be speculative. Examples of *V. i. callire* might possibly reach Britain as immigrants, as probably occurs occasionally in Portugal and south Spain, but for *V. i. indica*, whose nearest known place of residence is north west India, importation in early stages with produce or escape from some unreported breeding in captivity seem to be the least unlikely sources. — R. F. BRETHERTON, Folly Hill, Birtley Green, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 OLE.]

MELANIC FORM OF LOBOPHORA HALTERATA HUFN.: SERAPHIM (LEP.: GEOMETRIDAE). — On 2nd 1982, I took in my garden m.v. trap at Dartford, a melanic male of this moth, black with grey submarginal line. On referring to the comprehensive list of melanic forms found in Britain in Appendix B of Kettlewell's *Evolution of Melanism* (1973), I was surprised to find no mention of this species. Later, while discussing the capture with Mr. R. G. Chatelain, he mentioned that a melanic ab. of this species — ab. *nigra* Warnecke — was referred to in his copy of M. Koch, *Wir Bestimmen Schmetterlinge*. Recently, whilst visiting the British Museum (Natural History), Mr. Chalmers-Hunt kindly checked the species in the private collection there, and found 15 specimens of ab. *nigra*, all taken by E. B. White at Bristol between 1926 and 1935.

This melanic form would appear to be both extremely local and rare in Britain; if it is an industrial melanic it will almost certainly be dominant with homozygote and heterozygote indistinguishable in appearance (Kettlewell, 1973). It would be interesting to know if the Bristol location for ab. *nigra* is still known, if the form still occurs there, and if so, how commonly. — B. K. WEST, 36, Briar Road, Bexley, Kent.

THE FEATHERED BEAUTY: PERIBATODES SECUNDARIA D. & S. IN SUSSEX. — When I visited Mr. S. Church at his home at Plaistow, Sussex on the 14th July 1982, he showed me a female *Peribatodes secundaria* which he had taken in his garden trap the previous night. That evening there I saw a further four *P. secundaria*, all very worn males. It would seem therefore that to Mr. Church falls the distinction of being the first to record this species outside its Kentish locality. — R. G. CHATELAIN, 65, East Drive, Orpington, Kent.

AN EARLY APPEARANCE OF ERANNIS DEFOLIARIA CLERCK: MOTTLED UMBER. — On the night of 6 September 1982 a male specimen of this species was taken in a Rothamsted light trap in Monks Wood National Nature Reserve. Normally it does not appear in Monks Wood until mid October or later. The earliest previous record known to me was a male taken in the same trap on 25 September 1977. — J. N. GREATOREX-DAVIES, The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE17 2LS.